

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7857

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 1474

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AU, YU

SUBJECT: SLOVENIAN MINORITY ISSUE AGAIN HEATING UP

REF: VIENNA 1165

1. CARINTHIAN ORGANIZATIONS OF THREE POLITICAL PARTIES REPRESENTED IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT, SOCIALISTS (SPO), PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) AND FREEDOM PARTY (FPO), HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN CONVINCING THEIR RESPECTIVE FEDERAL LEADERSHIPS OF NEED TO GO FORWARD QUICKLY ON PLANS FOR HOLDING SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS IN CARINTHIA. AT FEBRUARY 20 MEETING CHAIRED BY CHANCELLOR KREISKY, REPRESENTATIVES OF THREE PARTIES AGREED ON TEXT OF MINORITY CENSUS BILL WHICH ALSO INCLUDES, CONTRARY TO EARLIER EXPECTATION. REQUIREMENT OF MINIMUM 25 PERCENT MINORITY PRESENCE FOR ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA. DRAFT BILL WAS APPROVED BY KREISKY GOVERNMENT FEBRUARY 24 AND PASSED TO PARLIAMENT FOR ITS CONSIDERATION. GOA ALSO EXPECTS TO SUBMIT FAIRLY SOON FOR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL COMPANION BILL ON PROMOTION OF MINORITIES.

2. SLOVENIAN MINORITY LEADERS ZWITTER AND TISCHLER,
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REPRESENTING TWO LARGER MINORITY ORGANIZATIONS, SENT

PROTEST TELEGRAMS TO GOA ON FEBRUARY 20 REGISTERING THEIR CONTINUED OPPOSITION TO HOLDING OF SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS AND IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS REJECTED THREE-PARTY AGREEMENT AS BEING IN EFFECT "REVISION OF 1955 STATE TREATY." ZWITTER WARNED IN HIS STATEMENT THAT STEPS WOULD BE TAKEN BOTH IN AUSTRIA AND ABROAD TO PREVENT HOLDING OF SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS.

3. KREISKY, RESPONDING TO PRESS QUESTIONS ON FEBRUARY 24, CONTINUED TO TRY TO MANEUVER ON ISSUE BY STATING THAT IT IS RIGHT OF EVERY COUNTRY TO CONDUCT HEAD COUNT AND THAT RESULTS WOULD BE USED FOR ORIENTATION PURPOSES. HE ALSO STATED THAT HE FELT SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS WOULD NOT DAMAGE RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA. TAUS, HIS OVP FEDERAL OPPONENT, WHEN QUERIED ON SAME SUBJECT, RESPONDED THAT EVERY SOVEREIGN STATE HAS RIGHT TO COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT ITS POPULATION.

4. AUSTRIAN MEDIA HAS REPORTED ADVERSE YUGOSLAV REACTION TO THREE-PARTY AGREEMENT IN FASHION TO SUGGEST THAT GOY STATEMENTS ARE LARGELY FOR RECORD WHILE REAL SOURCE OF TROUBLE-MAKING REMAINS SLOVENIA WHERE NOT UNEXPECTEDLY STRONG NEGATIVE REACTION TO THREE-PARTY AGREEMENT WAS REGISTERED.

5. TV INTERVIEW OF KREISKY FOLLOWING FEBRUARY 24 GOA CABINET MEETING SHOWED AN OBVIOUSLY POLITICALLY HARASSED CHANCELLOR TRYING TO MAKE BEST OF BAD SITUATION. HE SUGGESTED THAT HE HAD PRESSED FOR MORE LIBERAL TREATMENT OF MINORITY REGARDING PERCENTAGE REQUIREMENT AND OTHER FACTORS OF CENSUS BUT IN VIEW OF THREE-PARTY AGREEMENT IN CARINTHIA, HE BOWED TO WHAT HE MADE SOUND LIKE VOICE OF MAJORITY. IN THIS CASE KREISKY HOWEVER HAS BEEN FORCED TO YIELD TO WHAT HE WOULD TERM REALITIES OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL POWER, HAVING DONE LITTLE OR NOTHING IN EARLY PERIOD TO MODERATE TOUGH STANCE OF SOCIALISTS IN CARINTHIA. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS SUGGEST THAT CONTROL OVER EVENTS MAY AGAIN PASS TO EXTREMIST ELEMENTS IN CARINTHIA ON BOTH SIDES OF ISSUE AND THAT AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS MAY BE IN FOR ANOTHER POLITICAL BATTERING. BUCHANAN
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